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Introduction: One Rein Riding

Lesson 1:

Disengagement of the hindquarters
– *The Indirect Rein*

Lesson 2:

Leading the front end
– *The Direct Rein*

Lesson 3:

Stopping and Backing Up
with One Rein

Lesson 4:

Focus with your whole body

Lesson 5:

The 9-Step Backup

Lesson 6:

Sideways



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LEVEL 2 PREP GUIDE



Level
HARMONY

Level 2 Prep. Guide

Lessons 1-6

FreeStyle and Finesse Riding Skills

Introduction: One Rein Riding	2
Lesson 1: Disengagement of the hindquarters	
– <i>The Indirect Rein</i>	3
Lesson 2: Leading the front end	
– <i>The Direct Rein</i>	11
Lesson 3: Stopping and Backing Up	
with One Rein	19
Lesson 4: Focus with your whole body	24
Lesson 5: The 9-Step Backup	35
Lesson 6: Sideways	47

Introduction: One Rein Riding

Riding with one rein is a very important part of your development as a rider, so be patient as you learn! Using one rein at a time in order to communicate with your horse, even when you have two reins, is critical.

Here's why:

1. If you use two reins to stop or turn, the experience for the horse is that he's being pulled backwards in some way. It's the number one reason horses toss their heads or fight the bit. You're going to learn how to stop your horse by lifting one rein (as opposed to pulling) and to turn your horse in two ways: with an *Indirect* rein and a *Direct* rein.

2. Using one rein is a great habit to have in case you have to stop your horse in a hurry or get control of his emotions. If you pull on two reins in an emergency situation you make things worse because the horse feels claustrophobic, more panicked and it makes him try to break through the pressure rather than yield from it.

Once you have taught yourself and your horse to understand the different rein positions, you'll start riding with two reins in the later lessons.

Viewing Assignment

Play DVD-6, Chapter 3, and watch the segments with Linda titled "Preparation for *Level 2 Riding Skills*."

When you are done viewing this Chapter, return here.

Lesson 1: Disengagement of the hindquarters – The Indirect Rein

The Indirect Rein is a rein position that causes the horse to disengage his hindquarters. It gives you total control of the horsepower and it is *Phase 4* for turning a horse if he resists you in a *Direct Rein*. That's why you need to learn the *Indirect Rein* position first.

Disengagement is the opposite of engagement. When a horse is engaged he is powerful in the hind legs, they are braced apart, ready for action.

When a horse is disengaged, the hind legs get narrow and they step across each other. It takes the power away from the hind legs and is a great technique, at this *Level*, to get control of a flighty horse or one that is inclined to rear.

(In the higher *Levels*, when control is not an issue, you'll use micro-disengagement to set the horse up for more

complex maneuvers.)

In this lesson you will learn how to disengage the hindquarters by using an *Indirect Rein*. The *Indirect Rein* begins as lateral flexion and then comes up towards your belly button. At the same time, you will push your horse's hindquarters away with your leg. Unlike the lateral flexion rein position, the *Indirect Rein* is an active rein because it causes the horse to move.

Objectives

- ★ To know how to move your horse's hindquarters around in a circle while mounted, using an *Indirect Rein*, without allowing him to walk forward. As a result, your horse will begin to pivot on his front legs.

Tools

-  Halter, 12-foot Line, enclosed area, horse saddled, prepared with *The Seven Games*, and ready to ride.

Directions

For safety, be in an enclosed area when first teaching your horse this rein position.

This *Indirect Rein* exercise is done with one rein, with the *Horseman's Halter* and 12-foot Line.

Before getting on, teach your horse to understand what you want from the ground first. Stand in *Zone 3* and ask your horse for lateral flexion. Now politely push his hindquarters away (*Porcupine Game*^{#2}) with your other hand. Place your hand in the same place as your leg is going to be, on his ribs.

Repeat this several times until your horse understands what you want and moves willingly, then do the other side. The better it is from the ground, the more success you'll have when you're mounted.

When mounted and your horse is standing still (use lateral flexion as necessary), practice the technique without the rein first by simulating what you're going to do. Bring your hand from the lateral flexion position at your thigh, up towards your belly button, turning your fingernails upward. Remember, your hand position for disengagement is like stabbing yourself in the belly button!

As you do this, push down on the saddle horn or pommel with your other hand. This is called a power position and will help balance and stabilize you.

Points to remember:

- Close your fist and turn your fingernails upward. This

brings your elbow close to your ribs and is a power position.

- Your little finger needs to be the one touching your belly button, rather than your thumb, as if you were going to stab yourself!.

- Use a lifting action. This stops your horse stepping forward and helps him to pivot.

Now it's time to try it with the rein:

Slide your hand down the rope about half way, close your fingers slowly and ask for lateral flexion, your hand coming first to your thigh.

Once your horse has bent to you, slowly lift the rein toward your belly button, turning your fingernails upward.

Turn and look at your horse's tail. You'll be turning to the same side as your rein, to the right if you're bending your horse to the right and to the left if your bending left.

Take a power position with your other hand, push against the pommel or horn to anchor yourself and keep your balance. As with the *Pushing Position*, this helps you sit deep and allows your legs to be loose and independent from what you are doing with your arms.



Now gently push your horse with your leg (same side as you're bending him) causing his hindquarters to move away while his front legs pivot.

Release at the slightest try from your horse, then start again. If you can let him know he's on the right track he'll be more willing to try. It helps for him to know when he's doing what you ask.

If you release and rub after a couple of steps, pretty soon you will be able to ask for a full 360 degree pivot.

Success tips

- ✓ Have good lateral flexion first.
- ✓ Get *The Porcupine Game*^{#2} in Zones 3 and 4 so good on the ground that you can move the hindquarters around easily.
- ✓ The *Indirect Rein* comes toward your belly button first.
- ✓ Lift the rein slowly toward your opposite shoulder if your horse wants to walk forward instead of pivot, this is a more extreme *Indirect Rein*.
- ✓ Use a power position with your other hand.
- ✓ Push your horse's hindquarters away with your leg, the same side as you are bending him.
- ✓ For an effective "leg aid," turn your toe out so your heel

comes in contact with your horse's side. It doesn't need to be strong. Don't push hard, just turn your toe out and a little downward, and it will do the job.

- ✓ Focus over your horse's tail. This will put your body in the right position: your ribs will be bent, your body tipped slightly forward and your hindquarters will move off the saddle a bit... just like your horse needs to do!
- ✓ Release as soon as your horse does the right thing. You should also release if your horse gets "locked up." You don't want to force your horse, you want to teach him. So just take it slower, or get back on the ground to get it better there.
- ✓ Get both sides feeling equally responsive, the right *Indirect Rein* and the left *Indirect Rein*.

Pitfalls

- 💡 *Not enough preparation (ground skills).*
- 💡 *Fighting the horse's head, using force instead of teaching.* Be patient, I've never seen it take longer than two days! Set it up and wait, use your phases slowly.
- 💡 *Your Porcupine Game^{#2} is not good enough, therefore your horse doesn't understand what your leg pressure means.*

- 💡 *Kicking instead of using steady pressure with your leg.* Remember to start light and build from there, in phases. Getting faster or forcing the horse does not work well.

Troubleshooting

- ☹️ *Your horse won't move his hindquarters.*
- 😊 Get off and make sure he understands what you are asking on the ground.

Stand in *Zone 3*, bend his neck to you and play *The Porcupine Game^{#2}* at the back of *Zone 3* to move his hindquarters away from you and disengage them. Do this several times to ensure he understands before you try it again from his back.

For *Phase 4* you can also lightly tap him with your hand on *Zone 4* while you continue to hold the *Indirect Rein* position. Remember to tap LIGHTLY!

You'll need to swap hands on the rein to do this, and try to do it without changing the feel on it as you change hands. (Refer to DVD-6, Chapter 3.)

Use your phases as you tap to teach your horse to become lighter and more responsive.

If your horse is really locked up, don't force it. Try to

break it down into smaller steps, or even allow him to walk forward a little bit. Best of all, sort it all out on the ground.

- ☹ Your horse walks forward and doesn't really pivot.
- ☺ Simply lift your rein higher, crossing your body towards your opposite shoulder. This extra lift usually helps the horse to pivot rather than walk forward.

Lesson 1 Check List

- ☐ You can disengage the hindquarters to the right and the left equally.
- ☐ The front feet stay within an imaginary circle the size of a hula-hoop (you don't need them to pivot to the point that you're drilling a hole in the ground with one foot).
- ☐ Your horse is calm and your use of the rein and application of your leg are kind and smooth.

Success Map

Place a check mark on your *Success Map* to indicate you have completed the tasks for *Lesson 1* of your *Level 2 Prep*.

Lesson 2: Leading the front end – The Direct Rein

Introduction

Once you have proved yourself to be a good passenger, you can now prove to your horse that you can guide him naturally too. For this you will use a *Direct Rein* position.

The secret here lies in setting it up so your horse finds it easy and logical to move in the direction you want him to move.

The most common mistake people make when steering a horse is to lean in the direction of the turn. Unfortunately this is the exact opposite of what your horse needs you to do. When you lean into the turn you put weight on the part of the horse that needs to lift up.

Try this. Stand up and lean all your weight over your right foot. Now try to lift it up! It's dynamically impossible. In order to lift it up, you need to lean back on your left foot to take your weight off your right foot.

What you're going to do for a *Direct Rein* is put your weight in your seat, therefore weighting your horse's hindquarters. This will make turning your horse much

easier because the front end will get lighter since there is no weight on it!

Objective

- ★ To change directions and make turns using the *Direct Rein* which leads and guides the front end of the horse.

Tools

- 👉 Halter and 12-foot *Line*, enclosed area, horse saddled and prepared with *The Seven Games*. (Carrot Stick if you need to troubleshoot.)

Directions

The *Direct Rein* is responsible for moving the front end of your horse and essentially causing him to follow his nose!

Start with your rein on the left side.

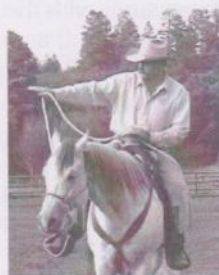
As you walk along, look at a point that's to the left of you, say at the 3-o'clock position. This will be a 90 degree turn.

Lift your rein gracefully and point your arm and fingers to 3-o'clock, holding the rein in the crook of your thumb (don't let it slip and get longer).

Your horse should follow the feel and the moment his

nose points where you want, drop your hand down into a neutral position again and keep walking forward (careful not to take his nose past it!).

When you lift your rein and point your fingers, your arm should be held almost straight out from your shoulder. This position helps lighten the front end of the horse and make it easier for him to turn.



This is an exaggeration, you won't always do this but it's important to get into the habit of having your *Direct Rein* be a "come up and over" rein as opposed to a "heavy down and dragging" one!

(Note: use the *Direct Rein* only when your horse is moving. At this stage it is easier to move the horse's front end while he's moving.)

What to do with your legs:

Simply put, your legs do what your hands do! When you point with your hand, point your toe too. This opens your leg in the direction you want to go like opening a door for your horse to go through. At this stage, don't do anything with your outside leg. More on that in *Level 2*.

Do only one side at a time. Make a series of left hand

turns and then throw your rope over to the other side and make a series of turns to the right.

Don't make your turns too sharp at first. 45 and 90 degree turns with the *Direct Rein* are best.

Troubleshooting

- ☹️ *Your horse resists the Direct Rein.*
- 😊 You may be pulling the rein too suddenly or leaning forward in your turn. Sudden pulls on the rein cause a horse to brace in defense. Sit back to make sure your weight is in your seat and handle your rein gracefully so you invite your horse to follow the feel.
- ☹️ *Your horse will not turn with the Direct Rein, even tries to go the opposite way.*
- 😊 After first checking that you are not blocking him with your leg or leaning forward, there are a few strategies for you to try:
 1. Get on the ground and check it out there: walk beside him in *Zone 3*, asking him to turn every ten steps or so until your horse understands to follow the feel of the rein. (Note: you would turn him to the left if you are on his left and right if you are on his right).

2. Use an *Indirect Rein* to get control of him and then smoothly move into the *Direct Rein* position again.

3. Support the *Direct Rein* with your *Carrot Stick*. It uses *The Driving Game*^{#3} on the outside of the turn to support *The Porcupine Game*^{#2} with your rein on the inside of the turn. First make sure you can play *The Friendly Game*^{#1} with the stick when on your horse and then help your horse yield to the turn by gently tapping the air near his nose. If you have to tap him, gently tap his cheek or upper neck. The moment he yields, rub him with the stick.

If you can make sure you first ask with the rein and then support with the stick, your results will be very pleasing. If you keep having to use the stick it will tell you that you're not giving your horse a chance to follow the feel on the rein and you might be bringing the stick into play too quickly.

- ☹️ *Your horse speeds up when you turn him.*
- 😊 This could mean you're accidentally gripping with your legs or getting tense in your body when you lift the rein. Make sure your legs are without tension and try not to brace on your stirrups either as this also causes tension. Rest your feet in the stirrups, put your weight in your seat and this will help your horse maintain the walk.

If you're doing all this and he still speeds up, use lateral flexion to stop and relax him before trying again. In an upcoming section you'll learn how to back your horse with one rein and you can use the same technique to slow your horse down... another savvy arrow for your quiver!

360 degree turns: using the Indirect Rein and Direct Rein in sequence

The easiest way to make a 360 degree turn is to use the *Indirect Rein* for the first half of the turn and the *Direct Rein* for the second half.

Ride along and follow the rail (arena or fence), have your rein on the side next to the rail.

As you walk forward, reach down and use an *Indirect Rein* to get a 180 degree turn, turning your horse toward the fence.

As he gets half way through the turn, change this to a *Direct Rein* so you keep turning until you are back following the fence again in the same direction. At the same time as you apply the *Direct Rein*, look up and in the direction you were going before.

Repeat this several times until it feels smooth like an *Indirect-Direct Rein* ballet! (Do not go faster than a walk,

this *Level 2 Prep.* sequence is not for faster gaits.)

Change the rein to the other side and do the same ballet. Go slow and right, making each move slow and sure, there's no need to rush. Rushing only unbalances your horse and makes him brace.

Important Note

This is a great exercise for practicing the rein positions, for putting two moves together, and for getting your horse's attention when moving. It's an important part of your transition to *Level 2* but not something to over do. Practice it until it feels easy and then do it once in a while to check on it.

Lesson 2 Check List

- ☐ You can do a *Direct Rein* and make 45, 90 and 180 degree changes of direction at the walk without resistance from your horse. You could even do some at the trot in a controlled environment.
- ☐ Your *Direct Rein* position uses a straight arm, your hand up level with your shoulder so it lightens the front end. (Remember, you are exaggerating to learn and to teach your horse. In *Level 2* you'll learn how to refine this).

- ☐ You are looking where you are going rather than down at the ground.
- ☐ Your legs do what your hands do!
- ☐ Your *Direct-Indirect Rein* ballet at the walk is smooth and without resistance.

Success Map

Place a check mark on your *Success Map* to indicate you have completed the tasks for *Lesson 2*.

Lesson 3: Stopping and Backing Up with One Rein

Introduction

This is a great skill to learn because it teaches you how to back your horse without pulling on the reins.

Many people ask why horses toss their heads and it's usually because they are being held back by the reins or being pulled on. They are fighting for their head!

Remember, horses are claustrophobic so you don't want to trap them. In a subsequent lesson you will learn how to back your horse with two reins and steady pressure, so learning to back first with one rein will build in a nice step to make learning easier when you get to two reins.

Objective

- ★ To be able to stop and back your horse using one rein.

Tools:



Halter, 12-foot Line, Carrot Stick, enclosed area, horse saddled and prepared with *The Seven Games*.

Directions

Make sure your horse is confident with you holding the *Carrot Stick* when on his back and that you can play *The Friendly Game*^{#1} by rubbing him everywhere with it. If your horse is unsure, you need to invest more time on the ground to help him not be afraid. It's impossible to communicate with the *Carrot Stick* when a horse is afraid of it.

While mounted, position your horse so you are standing alongside a fence. Have your rein on the same side as the fence. Your *Carrot Stick* will be in your other hand.

Relax your energy, lift the rein and start softly bouncing it up and down, increasing the intensity (not the speed) until your horse feels it bumping the halter. As you do this, point your *Carrot Stick* straight out beside his head to stop him turning away from the rein. The fence will help prevent him turning in the direction of the rein.

The moment he tries to go backwards, drop your hand to his neck and rub him. Wait a moment and then start again.

Repeat this a few times until you can see that your horse understands that you mean for him to back up.

Once you can get him from a halt into a back up with relative ease, you can try going from a walk to a stop and back up. Use exactly the same signal, walk along, relax your energy, lift your rein and start bouncing it, keep your horse

straight with your *Carrot Stick*. The moment he comes to a stop and back up, rub his neck.

Once you have practiced this against the rail with success (say two to three sessions) you can then try backing him without being next to the fence, once again using your *Carrot Stick* to keep him straight. Sometimes this means blocking him from turning on the same side as the rein!

Success Tips

- ✓ Do it slowly, don't rush your horse or he'll get bracey and even try to go forward.
- ✓ Being next to the fence at first can help you be straighter.
- ✓ Make sure you are "bumping" the rein upwards, not backwards or this is pulling.

Pitfalls

-  *Pulling on the rein*, this causes the horse to throw his weight forward.
-  *Jerking the rein backwards*. This will also cause a horse to throw his weight forward and brace. Make sure your "bumps" are in an upward direction.

 Trying to do this to make a quick transition from the trot. Not a good idea! You're going to have trouble because when a horse gets moving he can disconnect his mind from you and you'll just experience failure. If you do as directed, you'll be successful. Save the transition from a trot for somewhere in *Level 2*!

Troubleshooting

 Your horse will not back up, he lifts his head, turns it, tries to go forward but will not back up!

 Your best strategy is to get on the ground and make sure he really understands what you want and can do it right away. If this does not carry over once you're on his back, the next thing to check is your seat and legs. If there is any tension or squeezing going on you're actually telling your horse to go forward at the same time!

Finally, try putting your horse next to the fence and facing into a corner. This can help him make more sense of the fact that there is only one way out... backwards. Again, don't force him – *teach* him.

 Your horse gets scared, gets really tense and right brain.

 Get him left brain again (*Seven Games* on the ground!)

and save this lesson on his back for another day. Think about rehearsing and reinforcing it on the ground for seven days before trying it on his back again.

Lesson 3 Check List

☐ You can stop and back your horse from a halt and from a walk using one rein.

Success Map

Place a check mark on your *Success Map* to indicate you have completed *Lesson 3*.

Lesson 4: Focus with your whole body

Introduction

According to Pat Parelli, the most important four letter word you'll ever learn is Fo-C-U-S!

Focus gives you feel. Focus and feel give you timing.

Focus, feel, and timing give you balance.

Your whole body communication is tied in with focus.

Try this focus simulation with your Carrot Stick

Stand with your feet together and put your *Carrot Stick* between your thighs so it is pointing straight out, parallel to the ground.

Imagine you have eyes in other places too: your shoulders, belly button, hips and knees. Turn all your eyes to your right and watch what happens to the *Carrot Stick*. It turns and points in the same direction because it follows the direction of your focus.

This is how your horse will feel your focus. By focusing strongly and deliberately with all your "eyes" on where you

want to go, your horse will feel your focus and learn to follow it. Start learning how to consistently focus with your whole body.

Time for Two Reins & the Casual Rein Position

Now that you've practiced using one rein for control and direction you can move to two reins for more communication. Do this by tying your 12-foot *Line* into the loop of your halter.

1. Fold the end of your 12-foot *Line* in half and push it forward through the halter loop.

2. Pull the leather end through the hole created by the fold in the lead rope.



The Casual Rein

When riding with two reins you'll use the *Casual Rein* position. It's a relaxed and friendly rein position because it's trusting and not micro-managing. (Micro-management is

when you hold your reins short with two hands and puppeteer your horse giving him no chance to use his brain. More on this as we progress through the *Levels*).

Technique

Hold your reins with one hand and press the knuckles of this hand on the mane as close to the saddle as is comfortable. This serves two purposes:

1. It puts you in the *Pushing Position* with your knuckles and keeps your seat connected to your horse (remember that you push your seat away from your hand to achieve a deep seat).

2. It prevents you from pulling back or constantly holding back on the reins which would cause the horse to get tight and claustrophobic.

When you need to use your reins to direct your horse, LIFT the reins up with your "*Casual Rein* hand" and bring your other hand in to perform a *Direct* or *Indirect Rein*.

Walk your horse around and practice picking up a *Direct Rein* then go back to *Casual*. Then do an *Indirect Rein* and go back to *Casual*. Notice how easily you can change hands on the *Casual Rein* to be ready to go right or left. You can practice changing hands on the *Casual Rein* so it becomes second nature.

Now that you can make turns to the right and left it's time to have some fun playing some *Focus Games*.

Focus Games

Instead of meandering around a corral or arena, start picking something to ride toward... a fence post, a tree, a bucket, and then occasionally stop there. This will give both you and your horse a purpose with which to improve your steering skills. It also helps motivate your horse because it gives him something to look forward to. By discovering that you're actually going somewhere he'll start to put more effort into going where you want.

Objective

- ★ To use two reins with a *Casual Rein* position and teach your horse to follow your focus.

Tools

-  *Halter* and *12-foot Line* tied back into the halter to make a continuous loop rein OR a *Natural Hackamore* (which actually is a better set up for riding and the rein is not as long as the *12-foot Line*), enclosed area, horse saddled and prepared with *The Seven Games*.

Directions

Mount your horse once you've prepared him enough on the ground. Run through your checkout drill: test your lateral flexion and hindquarter disengagement.

Do a *Passenger Lesson* for a few minutes, it's a friendly way to start riding and allows your horse a little freedom while you practice developing your independent seat. Remember to be in a small area if your horse has more go than whoa.

Practice a few *Indirect* and *Direct Rein* moves, the ballet!

Now you're ready for some Focus Games

Hold the reins in the center with one hand, the *Casual Rein* position, and let them droop loosely. Push your fist lightly into your horse's withers/base of neck, the *Pushing Position* and then ask your horse to move forward. (Once you are more confident and don't need to push, you can bring your hand up off the withers but keep your hand stretched forward rather than back towards your body).

Pick a focal point to ride to, something like a post, a tree, a bucket, or a even a coat hanging on a rail.

Point your *Casual Rein* hand and all your "eyes" at your focal point and ask your horse to walk forward. When he starts walking, go back to the *Pushing Position* with your

knuckles touching your horse's mane.

If your horse tries to change directions or veers off track, lift your *Casual Rein* and use your free hand to put him back on track. The moment he's back on track, put your knuckles back on his mane and trust him to stay on track while you stay focused.



Once you reach your focal point, relax and stop. Stay there for 30 seconds. In fact, the harder it was to get there the longer you should sit there. This will give your horse a sense of arrival and by getting to stop and be comfortable it builds incentive for him to follow your focus.

Pick a new focal point and ride toward it with 'all your eyes.' Again, stop and relax when you reach it.

Keep doing this until you can do it without taking your eyes off that focal point and your horse starts walking straight and true towards it. Aim for making five corrections or less before you quit. A correction is counted each time you lift your reins to redirect him.

Try short distances at first and progress to longer ones when the short distances are working well. Don't use curves, use straight lines.

If you can start to do it easily at the walk, then try it at the trot (not necessarily in the same session).

Success Tips

- ✓ Use straight lines.
- ✓ Focus with all your 'eyes.' In this way your horse can feel when he goes off course because you'll still be on course!
- ✓ Never take your eyes off your destination, no matter what, not even once. Do not look down at your horse!
- ✓ Use the *Casual Rein* position and make larger corrections by using your other hand.
- ✓ Start slow, with short distances, then progress to longer distances, and finally do it at the trot.
- ✓ Stop every time you reach your destination and rest for a minimum of 30 seconds. This will teach your horse to want to get there and therefore to follow your focus better and better each time.
- ✓ Do this in your next four riding sessions, get on a 'focus program.'

Pitfalls

-  *Looking at your horse instead of at your focal point.* When you look down you lose your bearings. In addition, your horse will feel your loss of focus and start to take over.
-  *Using too long a distance at first.* Keep it short. Set yourself and your horse up for success.
-  *Tight reins or reins that are too short.* Your reins need to be short-ish but still loose! Here's a good tip: your reins are the ideal length when you can hold the end against the center of your chest and there's no slack in them.

Troubleshooting

-  *You have to make a lot of corrections.*
-  Sometimes 20 corrections can feel like a lot, but sometimes it's not enough! This is the time to trust and correct, trust and correct as many times as it takes until your horse realizes that by staying on a straight line you'll leave him alone.

The first time Linda played this game with her Thoroughbred, Regalo, she had to make 76 corrections! The next time 50. After 20 minutes it took four and that's when she stopped their first session, elated!

☹️ *Your horse gets faster and faster.*

😊 Straight lines 'lengthen' a horse where as circles 'shorten' a horse. Straight lines are great for helping slow and lazy horses find purpose in going forward but they can make a more spirited horse want to go faster.

If you have a horse that tends to be more energetic, keep the distances between your points short (10 to 50 feet) and stay at the walk and stay very focused.

Be prepared for many repetitions and try to stay at it until your horse can stay calm from one point to another.

☹️ *Your horse has trouble standing still when you get to your destination.*

😊 Some energetic horses will tend to have this trouble at first. If necessary, use lateral flexion until he can stand still and breathes a sigh of relaxation. Then turn the reins loose again. If he goes to move again, use lateral flexion again. If you stay focused on teaching your horse to stand and relax you'll be able to help him achieve this.

☹️ *Your horse makes such crooked lines you don't believe he'll ever go straight!*

😊 Don't worry. Straightness is what this exercise will teach your horse. It will also teach you to get a very good focus and to keep it no matter what, even if your horse tries to turn 180 degrees. Do whatever it takes to maintain your focus with all your 'eyes' and redirect with the rein as softly or firmly as necessary. Pretty soon you'll out-persist your horse and he'll realize there's comfort at the other end of the straight line, that nice rest stop.

☹️ *Your horse fights the rein when you try to direct him.*

😊 Use your Carrot Stick to support your Direct Rein. This will help him get lighter and more responsive and stop leaning on the rein when you try to guide him. Lightly tap the air or your horse's hair on his nose, cheek or upper neck... whichever part is not moving!

☹️ *You are having problems with this at the trot.*

😊 Go back to the walk for a while. Similarly, if you have problems at the longer distances, go back to the shorter ones for a while.

Lesson 4 Check List

- ☐ You can point your horse straight at a focal point 50 feet away and ride towards it at the walk, and not have to correct your horse with the reins more than three times.
- ☐ You can do this consistently at the walk and even over longer distances, but the trot may still need more time and practice.

Success Map

Place a check mark on your *Success Map* to indicate you have completed *Lesson 4*.

Lesson 5: The 9-Step Back Up

Introduction

This is a great exercise for training your hands to close slowly... and open quickly, teaching your horse to back up with confidence and lightness.

First of all, it's important that we call this a 'back up' rather than a 'rein back.' (The objective is not to pull the reins so it is best to eliminate terminology that will subconsciously cause you to pull.)

In teaching your horse to back up, there are two things to consider:

1. Backing up is not something horses do very much;
2. When asking your horse to go backwards, you have to actually 'ride' backwards.

Objectives

- ★ To teach your horse to back up confidently.
- ★ To teach your hands to close slowly, with "feel." There are nine definable steps.

Tools



Halter and 12-foot Line tied to form reins. Horse saddled and prepared with *The Seven Games*.

Directions

Step 1: Sit up tall, focus ahead of you and gracefully lift your reins up high with one hand until you can feel them tighten a bit and make contact with your horse.



Step 2: Bring your other hand onto the reins below your first hand, claspng the reins together and sliding your hand down until you reach a point mid-way up your horse's crest.



Step 3: Separate your shortened reins into two hands, clasping them with just your thumbs, fingers outstretched and pointing forward. (Don't change the length of the reins as you do this).



Step 4: Now close one finger at a time: first, your index fingers.



Step 5: Next your middle fingers.



Step 6: Then your ring fingers.



Step 7: Finally, your little fingers and squeeze your fingers to make fists, thumbs on top.



Step 8: Sink down in your belly so your back softens and rounds. Your pelvis will tilt and sink your pockets onto the saddle. Don't put any effort into this, just totally slouch your body and loosen your legs.

The only things not loose are your arms and hands. Make sure your weight is back towards the hindquarters and you are not leaning forward.

Step 9: Bend your elbows and bring them slowly back toward your hips and lock them there, don't pull past that point.

Release the instant your horse shifts his weight or tries to take a step backwards, open your fingers and drop the reins as if they were hot. This will tell the horse he's on the right track. Release even if you are only at Step 4! Then start again from Step 1.



Success Tips

- ✓ Focus on something a long way out in front of you, you don't want to look at your horse.
- ✓ Always start at Step 1. This lets the horse know what's coming.
- ✓ Isolate each step so it is clear to your horse. Later on you can blend steps 4 to 9, more on this below.
- ✓ Reward your horse with release for stepping backwards anytime after Step 4. If he starts to back at Step 1, just keep going through all the steps so he'll know he's right and in that way you won't teach him to back up just when you lift the reins. Above all, don't punish him for it... he's trying to do the right thing!
- ✓ Reward the slightest try for the first few times, then start rewarding each step he takes backwards, then after two steps, then after four steps. It won't be long before your horse will be confident enough to back all the way across an arena! But don't be in a hurry for this, let it happen over the course of several weeks.
- ✓ As you get more familiar with this, you can start sinking your belly and slouching down as soon as your fingers begin closing... from Step 4. In effect you would be slouching and closing your fingers simultaneously, so they melt into one.

Pitfalls

-  *Looking at your horse* instead of having a long, far away focus.
-  *Squeezing with your legs* instead of leaving them relaxed. Squeezing will confuse your horse as he'll think it means go forward.
-  *Pulling on the reins.* There is a big difference between pulling and holding. In this technique we ask you to bring your elbows to your hips, but don't take them any further. Just hold them there. Sinking or slouching your body down will do the rest. If it doesn't, see troubleshooting!
-  *Applying the steps too quickly.* The slower the better. Hands that close quickly cause a horse to brace up and fight against the pressure.
-  *Not releasing quickly enough.* The best teaching hands are those that close slowly and surely, and open very quickly. This is how you develop "feel" and therefore a more responsive horse.

Troubleshooting

-  *Your horse jerks your reins from you as you are applying the steps.*
-  This is not unusual. Many horses have learned that people's hands are flimsy so when they don't want to follow the feel they simply jerk the reins from you. You need to have hands that are as reliable as fence posts. When you close each finger down, make sure it is strongly closed, and lock your arms at the elbow so they can't be jerked forward. If you are sitting on your *Balance Point* this too will make it easier to hold fast without gripping with your legs. In fact, if you grip with your legs your seat lifts off your horse and prevents you from finding this power position.

When he gives to you, even just a little... release and let him know he's right. Then start over.

-  *Your horse tosses his head in mid finger-closing.*
-  Wait until he stops tossing his head before applying the next step. If he starts to do it again, just wait at that next point. By doing this he'll learn that tossing his head doesn't achieve anything. The worst thing you could do is release the reins or punish him. Just wait it out. Horses toss their heads from the fear of being trapped. Go slowly and with understanding, yet be effective.

☹️ Your horse won't back up and you're at Step 9.

😊 If he locks his hind legs and cannot back up, this is because he is 'engaged' in his hind legs. He is pushing against the pressure and thinking about going forward instead of backward.

Horses will do this if they are confused or scared. The flight response is triggered and therefore he cannot go backwards. That's important to understand otherwise you'll resort to force.

The first thing is to realize that what's not moving is your horse's feet. So, without changing anything else, simply bring life to YOUR feet... start flapping them by lifting them out and letting them drop.

Begin with just your feet and then let the motion involve your whole leg. Your legs should feel loose rather than tight and they should get faster and faster creating more up and out commotion rather than trying to "kick" your horse with them. This is actually *The Driving Game*^{#3} which is excellent support to *The Porcupine Game*^{#2} of your reins.

Most importantly, DON'T PULL HARDER ON YOUR REINS... DON'T! This is equivalent to yelling more loudly at a horse that just does not understand what is required of him. Keep your reins at the same degree of contact and, if anything, prevent him going forward.

Sometimes the best strategy for this is to face him into a corner or up against a fence (arena rail) so forwards is not an option and he finds that back up gear a little more easily.

Once again, don't force... TEACH. This may mean getting on the ground and trying to set up a similar situation standing next to him.

☹️ You've tried the flapping thing and he's still stuck!

😊 When his hindquarter is very engaged, you will need to help dis-engage it using an *Indirect Rein*.

Whatever you do, don't pull harder or you could make your horse rear up which a horse will do when he thinks he can't go forward and definitely thinks he can't go backwards! Think about this... most horses don't go backwards very much. They need to learn it as a skill... then have fun watching them use it on other horses!

Keep your hands in the same position at Step 9 and slowly bring ONE rein back towards your belly button. As soon as you feel a weight change or his hindquarter start to give, push your hand quickly forwards to where it



was, level with the other hand to give him release for trying to do the right thing. Allow him some time to process what happened and to lick his lips, then start all over again at Step 1.

The more you start over each time from the beginning, the quicker your horse will learn. Repetition will help him.

Of course if your horse is really stuck you need to get on the ground and help him realize it's just *The Porcupine Game*^{#2}! Once again, as a result of your own self examination, you need to make sure your legs aren't tight and your seat isn't pushing him forward because it's tight.

☹️ Your horse's back up is crooked.

😊 Don't worry at first. Just be happy that you are going backwards! Only once backing becomes easy should you think about getting more particular with straightness.

Ask for it too early and you'll frustrate your horse with too many demands at once, he'll think you are too picky and critical. Don't be afraid to have things be less than perfect at *Level 1* and *2*!

If it's really driving you crazy, straighten your horse with *Direct Reins*, repositioning the front end... GENTLY!

There are many reasons as to why a horse CANNOT back in a straight line and at this stage the only one you need to be concerned with is the fact that he doesn't really want to back up at all!

☹️ You just cannot get your horse to go backwards, he pushes against the reins or even rears up.

😊 Go back to the ground! How is your *Yo-Yo Game*^{#4}?

How is your *Porcupine Game*^{#2} in *Zone 1*? Get these to be better then try again.

You can also do the nine steps on the reins while standing on the ground in *Zone 3*. Keep the pressure even on both reins as you close each finger. The instant he goes to move backwards, release! Use the same principle of the *Indirect Rein* to unlock his hindquarters.

Lesson 5 Check List

- ☐ You are able to isolate each one of the nine steps clearly, one by one and it doesn't matter if your horse starts backing up before you get to Step 9.
- ☐ Your horse is backing up by the time you get to Step 9, or sooner, as above.
- ☐ You can back your horse for a total of at least six steps,

but not necessarily straight. (This is something you will continue to develop over future sessions).

- ☐ Your horse is not fighting against you and some crookedness may be present.

Success Map

Place a check mark on your *Success Map* to indicate you have completed *Lesson 5*.

Lesson 6: Sideways

Introduction

The better your horse goes backwards and sideways, the better he'll do everything else. Which means the worse he goes backwards and sideways, the worse he does everything else!

Sideways is a maneuver horses don't do very often of their own volition. Yet sideways maneuverability will become very important to you later on as it is the foundation for turns, spins, leads, and lead changes, aside from the more practical things like being able to move your horse sideways up to a fence, or to open a gate.

Objectives

- ★ To teach your horse while mounted to move sideways for several steps, both right and left.
- ★ To help your horse understand that pushing gently with one leg does not mean go forward or speed up, but to go sideways.

Tools



Halter, 12-foot Line, horse saddled and prepared with The Seven Games,... and a fence! At this Level, having your horse facing a fence will help prevent forward movement without you having to hold him back. In Level 2 we'll ask you to do it without a fence, but in your preparations for Level 2 the fence is a great tool and will help both you and your horse a lot.

Directions

Lift your reins and make a bridge (as you saw Linda demonstrate in DVD-6, Chapter 3). You simply cross your reins so you can hold them both in one hand. They should be short, so make sure you've taken a hold of the bridge somewhere close to half way up your horse's neck.

Horses really shorten their frame from head to tail when they go sideways. By having short reins you are ready for this and don't end up holding your reins somewhere close to your chest! Your hand will stay in front of your saddle.

Look to the side, in the direction you want to go, and pick a long focus way down the other end of the fence or arena rail.

Lift your elbow and point it in the direction you want to go but don't pull your reins, your hand should stay above

your horse's mane.

Sit up tall and gently push your horse sideways with your "outside" leg remembering to turn your toe out so your heel can come in contact with your horse's side.

If your toes are pointing forwards you'll end up pushing with the inside of your ankle and this is not very effective... it also makes you use too much muscular force in your leg. Remember, a horse can feel a fly land on him... he can feel your heel so he just needs to know what you mean!

Point the toe of your "inside" leg in the direction you are wanting to move (your inside leg when going sideways to the right would be your right leg.)

Most horses will not know how to respond so now is when you bring your *Carrot Stick* into play. Simply tap him on the zone that is not moving... *Zone 1, Zone 4*, etc. Tap LIGHTLY! Remember, you are teaching your horse to understand you. You are not supposed to be forcing him! Refer to the DVD for a good visual image of this. Don't make it more complicated than it really is!

As soon as your horse makes one step sideways, release and rub him (but don't let him walk away!), wait for a few moments, then start again.

Repeat this until you know your horse understands what you want... but don't ask him to go for very many steps. A

distance of about 4 to 12 feet would be just fine.

Get to where your horse understands how to do this to the right and to the left.

Success Tips

- ✓ A long focus, at least 20 feet or more away, at eye level or above.
- ✓ Short, "bridged" reins held in one hand.
- ✓ 'Closing' and pushing from the outside of the horse with your outside leg, and pointing the toe of your inside leg.
- ✓ Point the toes of your pushing leg outward and slightly down. This will give power to your leg without using muscular force.
- ✓ Use your *Carrot Stick* to help your horse move his zones individually if he does not move when you press him with your outside leg. Remember to stop and rub him with it each time he does the right thing, especially in the beginning. It will give him more confidence.

Pitfalls

- ☹️ *Focusing down on the ground* instead of a long way out.

☹️ *Kicking with your outside leg* instead of using steady pressure (it's *The Porcupine Game*^{#2} in Zone 3).

☹️ *Leaning in the direction of travel* instead of staying centered or even putting your weight into your outside stirrup.

☹️ *Holding your Carrot Stick out in a threatening position.* Keep it next to your leg until you have to use it.

☹️ *Not using phases with your Carrot Stick.* Constant tapping without effect is called nagging and from a teaching perspective is just as useless as hitting your horse. But hitting is more rude than nagging! Let your *Carrot Stick* have phases beginning with *Phase 1*, light tapping and remember to keep your leg "on" during the process. Only release your leg when your horse does what you want. If you start tapping and release your leg you'll teach your horse to only respond to your stick and not your leg.

Troubleshooting

- ☹️ *Your horse will not go sideways and resists your leg.*
- 😊 Fix it on the ground. Get your *Porcupine Game*^{#2} in Zone 3 (even Zones 1 and 4) working better. Also, review your *Sideways Game*^{#6} to make sure your horse really knows how to go sideways and can do it fairly confidently,

without resistance or fear.

If you still have trouble when back in the saddle, you'll need to find a way to increase phases by supporting with your *Carrot Stick* more clearly:

Phase 1 – keep your leg pressure on (not strong!).

Phase 2 – make sure your elbow is pointed toward your focus point but your hand remains over the mane and is not pulling sideways on the reins.

Phase 3 – Use your *Carrot Stick* to drive one zone at a time - *Zone 1* then *Zone 4*, then *1*, then *4*, and so on, while maintaining your focus and position.

Phase 4 – Start tapping that zone until it moves, slowly but surely increasing the intensity. Don't get faster, just a bit firmer.

As soon as your horse responds, release your leg and rub him with the *Carrot Stick*. Wait for about 10 seconds and, then start again. Always try to ask your horse sideways with your focus and light leg pressure before bringing in the driving factor with the *Carrot Stick*. In this way you teach your horse to "listen" to your leg.

☹️ Your horse tries to turn and go forwards.

😊 There are two reasons this could happen: your horse is

not responding to your leg, therefore his hindquarters are not going sideways, or; he could be afraid of your leg and is trying to run off.

Prevent your horse from turning his front end with your reins, simply do not allow him to turn his nose away from the fence. Keep your focus, do not look at your horse.

By keeping your eyes focused on the direction you want to go you'll be able to feel when your horse swings his front end or doesn't move his hind end, and as if by instinct, you'll be able to prevent/stop/change it because you'll know it's gotten out of position. If you look at your horse you'll have made all kinds of direction changes almost without realizing it! No matter what, keep your eyes glued to your destination!

If your horse is afraid, use plenty of *Friendly Game*^{#1} in between, and make sure you are very good with your phases. Too much, too suddenly can make an unconfident horse more scared. Think of it this way: your horse is your student and positive learning experiences take place best in the absence of fear. We all get it wrong, our horse can get it wrong, but when learning and trying the worst that can happen is punishment. Stop, rub, regroup and start again... even if that means not until tomorrow.

☹️ *Your horse goes backwards instead of sideways!*

😊 Usually it's because he's confused, and he's going to try things he's already learned. Keep it simple... if he goes backwards, abandon sideways and get him to move forwards again... then rub, wait a moment and then start again.

Think in terms of shutting every 'door' available to your horse except the one in the direction in which you want him to go.

Important Note

Don't ask for so much that your horse becomes dull again. Help him feel like a winner with plenty of rest and release each time he does well and this will help him become really responsive to your leg.

Keep your new teaching sessions short. Play with it for a few minutes and then go on to something you are both confident with. Now this new thing will become something you practice each time you ride, gradually improving it. Remember... when you first learn something, you cannot actually improve it. You will only have the opportunity to improve it in future sessions... little by little. In this way your horse will enjoy his learning process and not be stressed by it (not to mention you!).

Lesson 6 Check List

- ☐ You can ask your horse to go sideways over a distance of about 12 feet, both to the right and to the left, and if you have to use your *Carrot Stick*, it is only *Phase 1*.
- ☐ Going sideways right and left are pretty much equal... that DOES NOT MEAN perfect!

Success Map

Place a check mark on your *Success Map* to indicate you have completed the tasks for *Lesson 6*.

Congratulations! You are now ready for the Parelli *Level 2* Program Riding Skills!